Amendment To The Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (currently amended) A computer implemented method for authorizing payment upon delivery of an item to a destination comprising:

registering each one of a plurality of receiving parties with a transaction module in the computer;

registering each one of a plurality of sending parties with the transaction module in the computer;

generating a ~~globally unique~~ shipment tracking identifier for use with a shipping system;

generating a shipping label for use in delivering the item including the shipment tracking identifier for use with a shipping system;

associating the shipment tracking identifier with a particular sending party, a particular receiving party and the item using the computer;

storing data relating to the identifier and the particular sending party in the transaction module in the computer;

obtaining shipment tracking identifier data at a destination location from the shipping system indicating that the item has arrived at the destination;

correlating the shipment tracking identifier data to the particular sending party and the item using the computer; and

then, using the computer, authorizing a debit associated with the item from a selected account associated with the particular receiving party to a selected account of the particular sending party.

2.   (previously amended) The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the shipment tracking identifier is a postage indicium generated from a closed system postage meter.

3.   (previously amended) The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the shipment tracking identifier is a postage indicium generated from an open system postage meter.

4.   (original) The method as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising:
        notifying the receiving party that the debit has occurred.

5.   (original) The method as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising:
        notifying the sending party that the debit has occurred.

6.   (previously amended) The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the transaction module is operated by the receiving party.

7.   (previously amended) The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the transaction module is operated by the sending party.

8.   (previously amended) The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the transaction module is operated by a third party.

9.   (original) The method as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising selecting a particular carrier from a plurality of carriers for transporting the item.

10.   (previously amended) The method as claimed in Claim 1, further comprising:
        receiving confirmation information from the particular receiving party outside of the shipping system, at the transaction module, confirming satisfactory delivery, prior to the authorization step.

11.   (original) The method as claimed in Claim 1, wherein the identifier is stored as a bar code representation and the obtaining step includes scanning the bar code.

12.-22 (canceled).

23. (currently amended) An apparatus for authorizing payment upon delivery of an item to a destination comprising:

means for registering each one of a plurality of receiving parties with a transaction database;

means for registering each one of a plurality of sending parties with the transaction database;

means for generating a [[an]] shipment tracking identifier for use with a shipping system;

means for generating a shipping label for use in delivering the item including the shipment tracking identifier for use with a shipping system;

means for associating the shipment tracking identifier with a particular sending party, a particular receiving party and the item;

means for storing data relating to the identifier and the particular sending party in the transaction database;

means for obtaining shipment tracking identifier data at a destination location from the shipping system indicating that the item has arrived at the destination;

means for correlating the shipment tracking identifier data to the particular sending party and the item; and

means for then authorizing a debit associated with the item from a selected account associated with the particular receiving party to a selected account of the particular sending party.

24.   (previously amended) The apparatus as claimed in Claim 23, wherein the shipment tracking identifier is a postage indicium generated from a closed system postage meter.

25.   (previously amended) The apparatus as claimed in Claim 23, wherein the shipment tracking identifier is a postage indicium generated from an open system postage meter.

26.   (original) The apparatus as claimed in Claim 23, further comprising:
        means for notifying the receiving party that the debit has occurred.

27.   (original) The apparatus as claimed in Claim 23, further comprising:
        means for notifying the sending party that the debit has occurred.

28.   (previously amended) The apparatus as claimed in Claim 23, wherein the transaction database is operated by the receiving party.

29.   (previously amended) The apparatus as claimed in Claim 23, wherein the transaction database is operated by the sending party.

30.   (previously amended) The apparatus as claimed in Claim 23, wherein the transaction database is operated by a third party.

31.   (original) The apparatus as claimed in Claim 23, further comprising means for selecting a particular carrier from a plurality of carriers for transporting the item.

32.   (original) The apparatus as claimed in Claim 23, further comprising:
        means for tracking the item during the transportation of the item from a first location to the destination location.

33.   (original) The apparatus as claimed in Claim 23, wherein the identifier is stored as a bar code representation and the means for the obtaining step is a scanner device.

34.   (previously presented) The apparatus as claimed in Claim 23, further comprising:

means for receiving confirmation information from the particular receiving party outside of the shipping system confirming satisfactory delivery prior to authorization.